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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 009559

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2015

TAGS: PREL KDEM IZ JO

SUBJECT: IRAQ SUNNI OUTREACH: AMMAN MEETING WITH IRAQ
ELECTION CANDIDATE HASSIB AL-OBEIDI

REF: A. BAGHDAD 4857

1B. AMMAN 8259

Classified By: DANIEL RUBINSTEIN, DEPUTY CHIEF OF MISSION, REASONS: 1.4
(B &D)

¶11. (C) In a December 3 meeting with Emboff, "Arab List" candidate Dr. Hassib al-Obeidi predicted that his party would win between 3-5 seats in this week's Iraqi election. Obeidi is running as number one on the party's list in Kirkuk, followed by Sheikh Wasfi al-Asi al-Obeidi, a prominent leader of the al-Obeidi tribe. Hassib is hoping for a big tribal outpouring to put him over the top. After a dalliance with Allawi, Hassib joined the Islamic Party/Adnan Dulaim coalition, but pulled out at the last minute because he thought that their overall list was too aggressively clerical.

Alleged Crypto-Ba'athist Election Activities

¶12. (C) Hassib claimed that Ba'athist elements are working behind the scenes to position themselves in the new assembly. He cited Diyala as one governorate where "crypto-Ba'athists" are well organized, and supporting certain small party candidates who are likely to do well. However, he said that the Islamic party coalition is likely to be the main contender in Diyala.

Comments on Kurdish Parties - Money for Kirkuk?

¶13. (C) Hassib claimed to know the leadership of both main Kurdish parties well, and observed that Kirkuk "is the only glue that keeps them together." He mused that a financial settlement involving shares for the Kurds (read Talabani and Barzani) in the Kirkuk oil fields might be a way of resolving the Kirkuk political problem. Hassib criticized the two Kurdish parties for not campaigning outside the Kurdish area, and claimed that a serious effort on their part could have given them some seats in the south and elsewhere. He opined that this reflects a deal with the Shi'ite coalition, as well as the Kurdish parties overall provincial focus, and lack of real interest in Iraq as opposed to Kurdistan. (Embassy Baghdad Comment: In fact, the Kurdish parties have lists in multiple districts, including Baghdad, Wasit, and even Qadisiyah. Hassib doesn't know what he's talking about - a fact that is in itself interesting. End Embassy Baghdad Comment.)

¶14. (C) Hassib predicted that no political grouping will get a comfortable majority after the election, and claimed that everybody - including SCIRI and Dawa - will end up negotiating with everybody else. He suggested that an "Italian-like" situation of various coalitions succeeding each other is likely to emerge as Iraq's future political pattern.

¶15. (C) Hassib echoed comments we've heard from others about the unusual political positioning of the al-Gaaod's of Anbar. Although a small tribe, family representatives enjoy prominent places throughout the political spectrum, which he cynically speculated is no accident. Apart from Sattam al-Gaaod, in prison due to his Saddam ties and for supporting the insurgency, he noted:

Talal al-Gaaod - number one on Allawi's list in Anbar;

Fassal al-Gaaod - ex-Anbar Governor, now running with Ahmed Chalabi

Muzdif al-Gaaod - associate of Abdul Latif Humayum, now working closely with Saleh Mutlak

Majid al-Gaaod - tied to Adnan Dulaimi

Bezir al-Gaaod (Talal's father) - maintaining back-channel contacts with SCIRI leader al-Hakim.

De-Ba'athification Concerns

¶16. (C) Hassib expressed concern that he may be one of those targeted by the de-Ba'athification committee for removal from the election rolls (see Ref A). While acknowledging that he served in Saddam's (quite large) executive office,

he claimed he never gave a pro-Saddam speech or published a pro-Saddam article, and never informed on anyone, instead depicting himself as a rarely-consulted academic advisor on international issues. Note: Hassib met Ambassador Khalilzad, along with Dr. Iyad Allawi, in Amman last October (Ref B). He frequently travels to Amman. End Note.

¶7. (U) This cable was cleared by Embassy Baghdad.
HALE